

Come out and hear the robin sing,
And hear the bluebirds' tale of spring,
And see the swallows on the wing.
Come out and listen, listen now,
And hear the grasses as they grow,
And list the little rills that flow,
And learn to read their secret well—
The secret that they softly tell
To bird and bee in drowsy dell.
Of blooming banks that are to be,
Of fragrant fields and leafy trees,
And all the summer mystery.

A TERRIBLE REVENGE.

It was on the eve of the battle of Solferino. The French regiments, which had arrived from Milan during the day, by long and dusty roads, under a brooding sun, exhausted by fatigue, were encamped on an immense plain, shut in by a chain of hills, on which towered the white houses of the town. Lightning, playing among the leaden-colored clouds, illumined at intervals with lurid light the battle-field of the morrow. Nothing else lit up the camp. No fires were allowed, as a measure of prudence.

All were not asleep, however. Beside the outposts and pickets, many in camp were wide awake. Here and there groups of men, lying on the grass around their tents, conversed in a low tone and discussed the probable issue of the coming battle.

In the middle of a small group of officers, who talked over the chances of the morrow, was Colonel Eugene de Valmont, who commanded a regiment of light dragoons. He had the well-earned reputation of being one of the most splendid officers in his own branch of the service. Although a disciplinarian, he was beloved in the regiment by officers and men alike, and deservedly so.

Colonel de Valmont appeared to pay little attention to what was said. He seemed in a profound reverie, as he bit, rather than smoked a half-consumed cigar. Turning suddenly to his surgeon-major, a veteran with a well-bronzed face, he said:

"Brisac, do you believe in premonitions?"

"It depends, Colonel. One may have them, no doubt; but to admit that they are ever realized is another matter."

"You look upon them as valueless—devoid of any prophetic importance?"

"Quite so."

"Ah! It is true, as is said, that all you doctors are more or less materialists." After a pause, he added: "You are right, perhaps, and so much the better. There are some thoughts which should be banished on the eve of a day like what to-morrow promises to be."

So saying he got up and added: "I shall turn in and get some rest and advise you all to do the same. In a few hours we shall need all the strength we can command."

One by one the group broke off, and presently there was only three officers—the major, a captain and sub-lieutenant.

"What did the Colonel mean by premonitions?" asked the younger of them. "We know he has no fear about to-morrow; yet his manner and his last words, to say the least, are not reassuring."

"Had you been longer in the regiment, you would know that the Colonel periodically gets the 'blues'; but we take no notice of them. They soon pass, and he becomes himself again."

"But what is the cause of this recurring depression?"

"The cause?" said the captain, "why all the regiment know the cause."

"Except myself. I only joined three months ago."

"Well, here is Brisac back from his rounds. He can tell the story best."

The surgeon-major being appealed to lay down upon the grass, lit a cigar, and said:

"In 1834, de Valmont, appointed lieutenant in the Chasseurs d'Afrique, which had just been raised, landed in Algiers, where I was assistant surgeon attached to the military hospital. Though I was older than he, we soon struck up an acquaintance that ripened into friendship, which time has not impaired. Eugene was young, good-looking, and a man of fascinating manners. He came of a distinguished family, and his friends kept his purse well filled; in short, he could get money as fast as he wanted to spend it."

"We served three years together, when de Valmont got leave to exchange and return to France. His mother was the cause of this, for she had in view for him a marriage with a rich heiress. Leaving Algiers with a few plain sailing, except for bidding 'farewell' to a certain lady called La Severina, a danseuse at the theatre. In appearance she was decidedly handsome, of an olive-colored complexion and with raven black hair. In her large expressive eyes and in her firmly-cut mouth there was a significant indication of determination, which suggested that the young lady would be more desirable as a friend than as an enemy. She said she was an Italian, having been born at Rome; but her parents were Bohemians, who traveled through all countries—rope-dancers by profession."

"La Severina had conceived for Eugene a passion as violent as it was hopeless. When she heard of his proposed departure she was wild; when she learned the motive of it she turned a demon. Failing in a determined attempt to bathe his plans by stabbing him with a stiletto, she assured him with her last words that she would be

revenge. De Valmont laughed at the threat. I, however, determined to keep an eye on the actions of the young lady. In this resolve, however, I was foiled. She left Algiers about a month after, and I never knew what became of her."

"Nearly four years had passed since Eugene's return. We kept up a constant correspondence, and I learned of his marriage and a birth of one son, whom he called Lucien. He continually pressed me to exchange and go back to France."

"At length I got appointed to a cavalry regiment quartered in Paris, and left Algiers to take on my new duties. Landing at Marseilles, I put up at the Hotel Castellane, where the first names I read in the list of arrivals were those of Count and Countess de Valmont. We met with joy after our long separation. Eugene introduced me to his wife—a lady as lovely as she was charming—and showed me with pride his son—a fine chubby child, with curly hair, and the splendid blue eyes of his mother. He simply worshipped this boy—poor fellow!—and his life and soul seemed wrapped up in its being and existence. And now, as to the sad sequel to my tale."

"De Valmont was on leave, and at his wife's desire they were about to visit Italy. Not to fatigue the child their route was mapped out in short stages. They were resting two days at Marseilles before going to Genoa by La Corniche, so I decided to stay and see them off."

"In the afternoon of my arrival, as the weather was glorious, little Lucien was sent with his nurse down to the sea, on that magnificent beach where the splendid palace of Prado stands. Two hours after this the nurse returned alone, looking like a mad woman. The eyes were staring out of her head, and sobbing and crying, she threw herself at the countess's feet, and said she had lost the child. She and her charge were playing on the beach, where they were attracted by the performance of some acrobats. A small crowd had assembled, and the boy was not out of her sight for half a minute. On looking around he was gone, and she sought him in vain. He seemed to have been spirited away. She called his name at the top of her voice, and ran up and down the beach until exhausted. Bystanders who heard her cries helped her in her search; but they found nothing."

"Was Lucien drowned?" asked the sub-lieutenant.

"This was the question started, but it seemed well nigh impossible. The child could only toddle, and the sea was too far from the place indicated by the nurse. So this hypothesis was given up. The police considered it a case of kidnapping, and went to work, but failed to find a clue. They searched for weeks—the low quarters where the dregs of the population congregate, the scum of the Mediterranean—but with no success. A description of the child was sent to every consul, with orders to make full inquiry. De Valmont himself obtained special leave of absence from the war office, and spent a year in trying to solve the mystery. He returned more dead than alive to bury his wife, whom grief had killed."

"As to the Colonel, at first he had serious intentions of joining the Trappists and retiring from the world. But hope sustains him still. He believes, if his boy is not drowned, that Providence will take pity on him and yet restore him. Vain delusion! But we humor him in his hope. He has since devoted his whole life and soul to his regiment; but the wound at his heart never healed, and when it breaks out afresh he becomes sad and sorrowful, and talks about premonitions."

"La Severina, I believe, has kept her word, and wreaked a terrible revenge!"

Brisac finished his story and wished all good night.

"We have six hours for sleep, my boys, and then—"

On the morrow, at the early hour of six o'clock, a double line of smoke extended for a distance of two miles on each side of the plain. The French had brought almost all their guns into action. The Austrian batteries posted on the opposite hills replied with a well-directed fire. In this artillery duel, which lasted for some hours, the advantage remained with the French. The superiority of the Austrian position was more than counterbalanced by the deadly effect of the rifled guns of the French, which were first employed in war-fare at the memorable battle of Solferino. The carnage was frightful and the result disastrous to the Austrians, who were obliged to retreat.

At three o'clock on that day—June 23d 1859—the French were formed up to advance under a withering musketry fire to assault the tower of Solferino, the key of enemy's position. Marshall Benedek then called on his cavalry to make a supreme effort, which, had it been successful, would have changed the fortunes of the day.

The Austrian cavalry were massed behind a fringe of wood which effectually concealed their movements from the French. Suddenly they were seen to emerge from their shelter and to prepare for a determined charge, to take in flank those battalions which had already reached the slopes of the hills. Gen. Niel saw the danger, and immediately hurled against them the Marguerite division of cavalry, in

which de Valmont's light dragoons charged in the first line. The shock was terrific. The elements contributed to swell the frightful storm of war. Peals of thunder belled forth and vivid lightning played over the ghastly sight beneath.

It was after the delivery of the charge "home" that Colonel de Valmont suddenly saw rise before him about a dozen Hussars, in white, of the Archduke Albrecht's regiment. Led by a young lieutenant with fair and a budding mustache, they sabred the French dragoons with maniacal fury, making their way through them like a cannon ball. With one bound of his horse the lieutenant was at the Colonel. De Valmont saw his sabre flash as he raised it to cut him down. He had only time to pull the trigger of his pistol and the Austrian fell, killed by a bullet in the forehead.

At the end of the engagement Colonel de Valmont, returning to camp, passed over the scene of the conflict. The body of the lieutenant still lay on its back. A thin trickle of blood marked the spot of the bullet wound. The face of the young officer was as calm and placid as a child asleep. De Valmont gazed at him with profound emotion. A few yards off some dismounted men were guarding Austrian prisoners, among whom was an officer of Albrecht's Hussars. Pointing to the dead body the Colonel asked:

"Sir, can you tell me the name of that brave fellow?"

"Karl Gottfried," was the answer. One month after the peace of Villafranca, Eugene de Valmont returned to Paris with the army of Italy, where he found the following awaiting his arrival:

MILAN, August 6th, 1859.

MY DEAR OLD FRIEND: YOU know that I am still at the military hospital here, where I shall remain until all our wounded are removed. They brought in the other day several marauders caught by our men riding the dead, and on some of them who tried to escape they fired. Among them was an old woman disguised as a man. A bed was found for her, as she was on the point of death. I offered my services to dress her wound, and judge of my amazement when I heard her say: "You don't remember me, Dr. Brisac. I am La Severina." Under the withered features of the woman I recognized your former acquaintance in Algiers. By what series of misfortunes she came to be a despoiler of the dead I shall not attempt to explain. Enough to know that before dying she allowed the priest to communicate a part of her confession, and as I have for long thought, she it was who stole Lucien at Marseilles.

"After a host of adventures, which I shall tell you later on, poverty compelled her to abandon the child at Vienna. She left it to the charity of the landlady where she lodged—No. 20 Rosestrasse—and never heard of the boy after. This address will give you some trace. Apply at once to the Austrian embassy. Tout a toi.

Brisac."

Mad with joy, the Colonel ran to the embassy and explained the object of his mission. For a fortnight after, which seemed to him a lifetime, he lived in a fever of suspense, and was going to bed one night when his valet brought him an official letter, with a large red seal bearing the Austro-Hungarian arms. He read as follows:

"Monsieur le Comte—I am instructed by the minister of foreign affairs to inform you, in answer to your inquiries, that the child abandoned in Vienna, at the address given, on the 26th of September, 1846, was adopted by a benevolent gentleman. He was educated at the military school of Olmutz, which he left last year with the rank of sub-lieutenant. Posted to S. A. T., the Archduke Albrecht's regiment of Hussars, he was killed at the battle of Solferino. He bore the name of his adopted father, Karl Gottfried."

One hour afterward the valet entered the Colonel's room and found him sitting in his chair. His face was deadly white. His eyes dilated and immovable, were fixed upon the fatal letter.

The servant touched him lightly on the shoulder, and his master dropped motionless on the floor. He was dead.

Still Somewhat Strangers.

"Billy, I hear you were married a few days ago."

"Yes, that's so."

"Well, how do you like the married life?"

"Oh pretty well."

"And your wife—how do you like her?"

"Oh, tolerable. But I ain't got used to her yet very well; maybe after I get use to her I'll like her better. She's got some doggone curious ways which I didn't know of afore I got married."

In a Safe Place.

First Cincinnati—"What a fearful riot that was. I lost several dear friends in it."

Second Cincinnati—"Were you hurt yourself?"

"Yes; I was wounded while standing on my own doorstep, but only slightly. Were you hurt?"

"Oh, not at all. I was in a safe place while the rioting was going on."

"Where were you?"

"In jail."

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